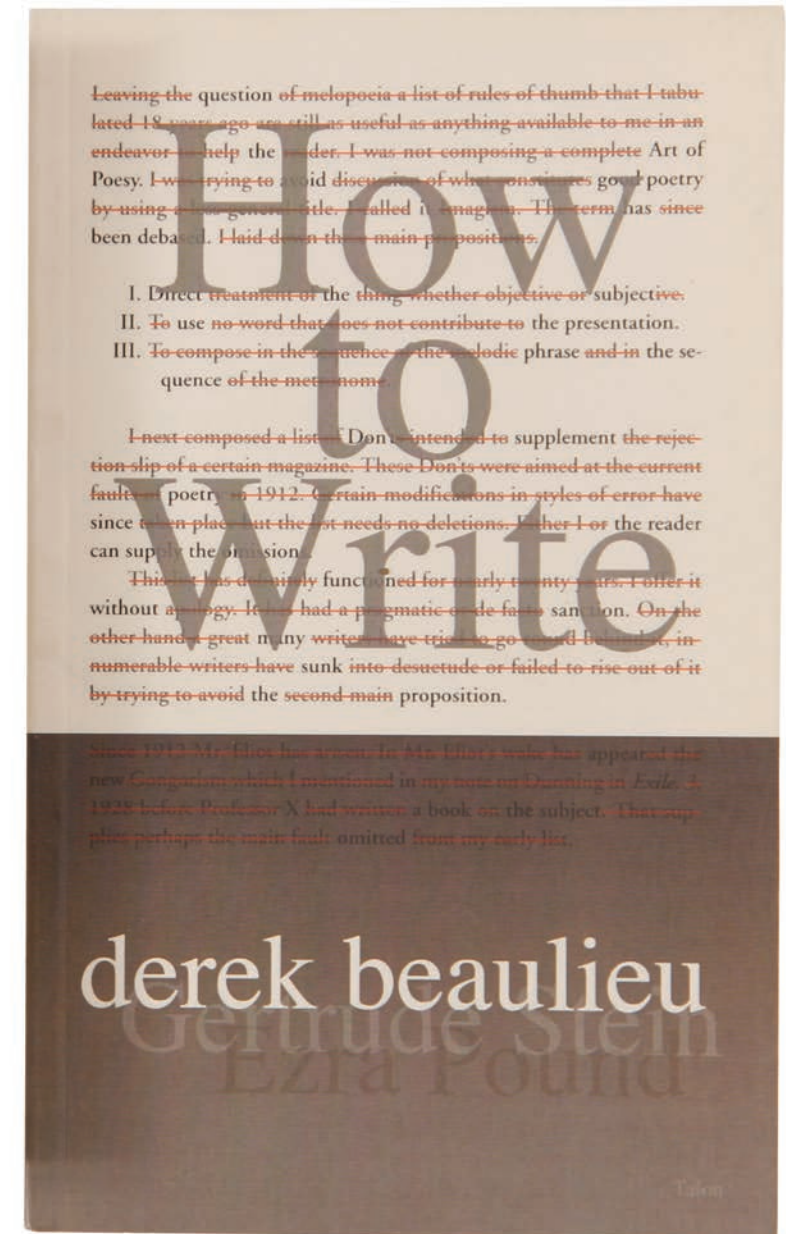


Start copying what you love.

Copy, copy, copy.

And at the end of the copy,
you will find yourself.”¹

Yohji Yamamoto



Copying is often denigrated as an activity. However, several important thinkers have recognized the value of copying the words of others. Walter Benjamin extolled the virtues of copying:

“The power of a country road is different when one is walking along it from when one is flying over it by airplane. In the same way, the power of a text is different when it is read from when it is copied out. The airplane passenger sees only how the road pushes through the landscape, how it unfolds according to the same laws as the terrain surrounding it. Only he who walks the road on foot learns of the power it commands [...] Only the copied text commands the soul of him who is occupied with it, whereas the mere reader never discovers the new aspects of his inner self that are opened by the text, that road cut through the interior jungle forever closing behind it: because the reader follows the movement of his mind in the free flight of day-dreaming, whereas the copier submits to its command.”ⁱⁱ

Gertrude Stein suggested that the only real way to know a book is to copy it:

“I always say that you cannot tell what a picture really is or what an object really is until you dust it every day and you cannot tell what a book is until you type it or proof-read it. It then does something to you that only reading never can do.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The celebrated author W. G. Sebald allegedly gave the following advice to his creative writing students:

“I can only encourage you to steal as much as you can. No one will ever notice. You should keep a notebook of tidbits, but don’t write down the attributions, and then after a couple of years you can come back to the notebook and treat the stuff as your own without guilt.”^{iv}

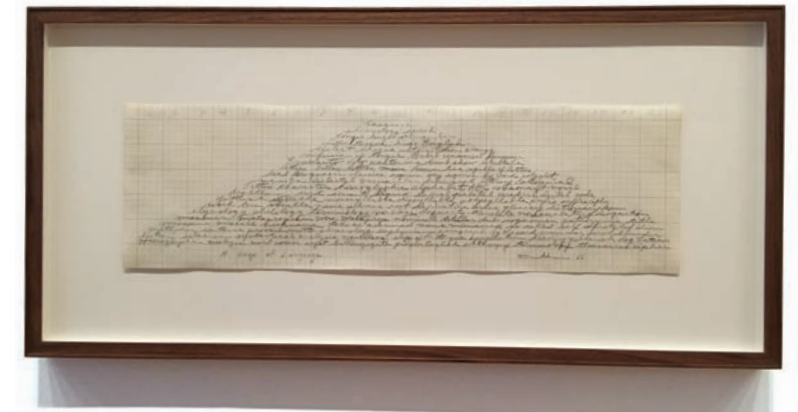
James Joyce, billed as the Shakespeare of modernism, wasn’t immune to borrowing from others either:

“I am quite content to go down to posterity as a scissors and paste man, “Joyce told the American composer George Antheil,” for that seems to me a harsh but not unjust description.”^v

And even writing what is typically considered ‘original’ material might, in fact, involve ventriloquizing someone else’s words, as in this humorous case described by the author Mark Twain:

“Oliver Wendell Holmes [...] was [...] the first great literary man I ever stole anything from – and that is how I came to write to him and he to me. When my first book was new, a friend of mine said to me, ‘The dedication is very neat.’ Yes, I said, I thought it was. My friend said, ‘I always admired it, even before I saw it in The Innocents Abroad.’ I naturally said: ‘What do you mean? Where did you ever see it before?’ ‘Well, I saw it first some years ago as Doctor Holmes’s dedication to his Songs in Many Keys.’ [...] Well, of course, I wrote to Dr. Holmes and told him I hadn’t meant to steal, and he wrote back and said in the kindest way that it was all right and no harm done; and added that he believed we all unconsciously worked over ideas gathered in reading and hearing, imagining they were original with ourselves.”^{vi}

The precedents are undoubtedly there, throughout history. What distinguishes copying today, however, are the digital tools and the networks of the internet, which make possible shifting large chunks of language from one place to another in an instant. In the digital age heaps of language – to borrow from Robert Smithson – are reorganised, remediated and reconstructed all the time. In the process, the distinction between the writer and machine is becoming increasingly blurred.



Robert Smithson’s *A Heap of Language*, (1966) pencil on graph paper

At one extreme, there is Andy Warhol, who ‘want[ed] to be a machine’,^{vii} his idea developed further by Christian Bök as ‘robopoetics’. Bök’s concept refers to a condition where

“the involvement of an author in the production of literature has [...] become discretionary”.^{viii} He asks: “why hire a poet to write a poem when the poem can in fact write itself?”^{ix}

Bök’s bleak prediction for our literary future is that:

“we are probably the first generation of poets who can reasonably expect to write literature for a machinic audience of artificially intellectual peers. Is it not already evident by our presence at conferences on digital poetics that the poets of tomorrow are likely to resemble programmers, exalted, not because they can write great poems, but because they can build a small drone out of words to write great poems for us? If poetry already lacks any meaningful readership among our own anthropoid population, what have we to lose by writing poetry for a robotic culture that must inevitably succeed our own? If we want to commit an act of poetic innovation in an era of formal exhaustion, we may have to consider this heretofore unimagined, but nevertheless prohibited, option: writing poetry for inhuman readers, who do not yet exist, because such aliens, clones, or robots have not yet evolved to read it”.^x

Or as Bök puts it, referencing Calvino in an earlier section of the same essay, perhaps we can use algorithms to extend the lives of dead poets and create an ever-extending series of posthumous works:

“Calvino (a member of Oulipo) remarks that every author is already a ‘writing machine,’ producing literature according to a set of involuntary constraints that, under rational analysis, might be codified into a set of adjustable algorithms. Oulipo implies that, when computers begin to reveal the stylistic constants of an author, we might begin to emulate these idiosyncrasies of diction and grammar, thereby manufacturing an automatic, but convincing, facsimile that might conceivably extend the career of a writer into the afterlife of postmortem creativity.”^{xi}

As if anticipating this robopoetic future, in the 1950s the notorious journalist Hunter S. Thompson used to retype Hemingway’s and Fitzgerald’s novels:

*“He chose, rather than writing original copy to re-type books like *The Great Gatsby* and a lot of Norman Mailer, than *Naked and the Dead*, a lot of Hemingway. He would sit down there on an old type-writer and type every word of those books and he said, ‘I just want to know what it feels like to write these words.’”^{xii}*

Thompson’s literary work-outs explored a complex relationship between typing and writing as it is determined by the ways in which we engage with the machine. Central to Thompson’s project is the desire to embody the experience of pressing the metallic keys of the typewriter, as if staging a peculiar re-performance of the acts of Fitzgerald’s or Hemmingway’s writing, hammering the words onto the space of the page until mechanical typing assumes the quality of creative writing. Here, copying what one loves – to return to Yamamoto – results in eventually finding oneself in the writing.

The machines might be changing the way we engage with or think about writing, but the writer continues to be present in our new media age, navigating the complex landscape of writing as re-writing at the contemporary Iterative Turn;^{xiii} a turn towards a culture of ubiquitous “re’-gestures – such as re-blogging and re-tweeting.”^{xiv}

This small curated collection – the first Research Field Station at Leeds Beckett University – brings together a number of key works that examine the rich variety of copying activities in both art and literature.

Le Livre

by Klaus Scherübel (2001)

In the decades leading up to his death, the French poet Stéphane Mallarmé often referenced a wonderful work he simply titled THE BOOK. Mallarmé had previously speculated: “*Everything in the world exists in order to end up in a book.*” He proposed this ultimate book as the essence of all literature. It would contain absolutely everything and always be relevant, existing outside of time. It would exist outside of history, always becoming absolutely present in any given moment. The writer would disappear and the words would operate like thought and language, the book would continually hold together a flurrying constellation of words through an incalculable network of relations. The book would provide no answers or permanent truths and only reference those things that exclude any limited, defined or final meaning. Although the work was never realised, and no record of the contents of this ultimate bookwork exists, details of its material properties and physical proportions were documented in a 200-page manuscript. In this collection of notes on The Book, Mallarmé specified the order of the pages which were to be loosely bound to enable the reader (or operator) to navigate them in any order, the dimensions of the work, the size of the edition (480,000 copies) and its retail price, which was to be determined by the number of listeners present at each reading. The book never progressed much beyond its conception. Included here is an edition of Mallarmé’s lengthy instructions, published in 1957 by Gallimard, and a response to them created by the Austrian artist Klaus Scherübel who in 2001 realised Mallarmé’s imagined publication. The result is simply a book cover, inviting the reader to construct the content, by imagining it. Scherübel’s Mallarmé has been published in France as *Le Livre* (2001), in Germany as *Das Buch* (2001), in The USA as *The Book* (2003), and in The Netherlands, as *Het Boek* (2009). Whether this book by Scherübel is or is not a copy – an edition of a book that never existed, a copy without original – it is a good starting point to this unusual collection; it is the book that holds within its covers the promise of every book and no book at all; it simultaneously anticipates the potential of copying and assumes its impossibility.

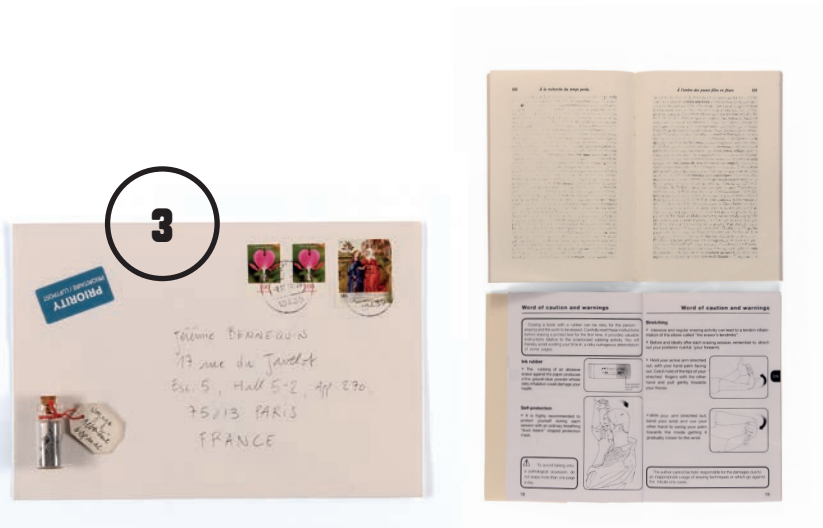


gustave flaubert: un coeur simple

by Sherrie Levine (1990)

Best known for her photographic appropriations, Sherrie Levine’s early works also included artists’ books and a range of writing experiments, of which *The Simple Heart* is an example. In 1985 Levine republished Gustave Flaubert’s short story “Un Coeur Simple” as her own work in the journal *New Observations*. No alterations at all were made to the original text, subsequently published as the book which is included here. Flaubert’s story focuses on Felicité, a poor country girl who “loves one after the other a man, her mother’s children, a nephew of hers, an old man who she nurses, and her parrot.”^{xv} Each love is a substitution for one lost before. Felicité’s life is filled with repetitions of the cycle of life, love and death, and the story, as a result, echoes the conventions of melodramatic realism adopted by the author: “*Like everyone else, she had had her love story,*”^{xvi} wrote Flaubert. Levine’s appropriation gesture evokes this implicitly iterative nature of the original narrative. As Howard Singerman puts it: “*Levine’s republished version follows – logically, one wants to say – as just another repetition of a story that Flaubert understood as always already told.*”^{xvii} Levine works here with a text that is inherently unoriginal, and, as a result, presents a story that is, similarly, always already told, one that comes to her as a ready-made and whose status as a ready-made is further foregrounded in the act of its republication. Levine’s appropriation of ‘Un Coeur simple’ is a gesture of minimalism and excess at the same time: she copies everything and nothing simultaneously. Unlike the notorious Pierre Menard, laboriously writing his *Don Quixote* from scratch, or Simon Morris retyping Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* (see number 12 here), Levine reproduces the text of Flaubert’s story by means of not copying. To create ‘The Simple Heart’, she relies solely on re-assignment of authorship that results in a complete expropriation of the original. She copies nothing and everything at the same time.

Published by Imschoot, Uitgervers, for Antichambres, Affinites Selectives, MCMXC. No. 5/50.

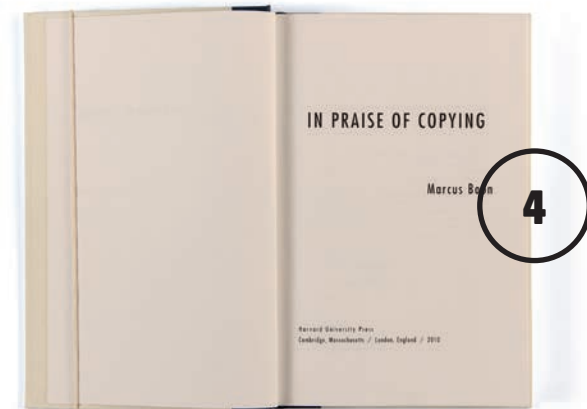


ommage À la recherche du temps perdu by Jérémie Bennequin (2005-15)

Bennequin’s work, like Scherübel’s, challenges familiar ideas about copying. In *ommage À la recherche du temps perdu* Jérémie Bennequin erased the text in Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*, one page a day, word by word, line by line, using a series of Indian ink rubbers. Can rubbing out count as copying? *ommage* is an exercise in erasure – a work interested in the possibility of removal of text rather than its reproduction. However, we suggest that in Bennequin’s process a complex form of copying and inscription is taking place. His acts of erasure rely on an intimate familiarity with the text achieved in the process of reading. Before erasing it, the artist reads twice each page he is about to transform to commit the text to memory. By doing so, he reverses the dynamic of remembering that is typically heavily reliant on acts of copying. Copying, or transcription, used to be an important learning process: Mozart transcribed Handel’s *Messiah* and Bach’s fugues, Schubert copied Beethoven, and Beethoven copied Mozart’s string quartets to remember them, driven by the conviction that the mind learns through the transcribing hand. Bennequin, in contrast, attempts to remember first and use the memory of the text to direct the movement of the erasing hand on the page. What remains in each case is a page marked by textual traces – a page that remembers – and the rubber shavings collected in the process as literal heaps of erased language. Here, the act of destruction transforms into a form of textual reproduction by means of remediation; printed words transform into heaps of language and the printed text is re-produced as textual material.

In Praise of Copying by Marcus Boon (2013)

Providing some critical muscle to the subject of copying is Marcus Boon’s book, *In Praise of Copying* published by Harvard University Press, no less. “This book is devoted to a deceptively simple but original argument: that copying is an essential part of being human, that the ability to copy is worthy of celebration, and that, without recognizing how integral copying is to being human, we cannot understand ourselves or the world we live in. In spite of the laws, stigmas, and anxieties attached to it, the word “copying” permeates contemporary culture, shaping discourse on issues from hip hop to digitization to gender reassignment, and is particularly crucial in legal debates concerning intellectual property and copyright. Yet as a philosophical concept, copying remains poorly understood. Working comparatively across cultures and times, Marcus Boon undertakes an examination of what this word means—historically, culturally, philosophically—and why it fills us with fear and fascination. He argues that the dominant legal-political structures that define copying today obscure much broader processes of imitation that have constituted human communities for ages and continue to shape various subcultures today. Drawing on contemporary art, music and film, the history of aesthetics, critical theory, and Buddhist philosophy and practice, *In Praise of Copying* seeks to show how and why copying works, what the sources of its power are, and the political stakes of renegotiating the way we value copying in the age of globalization.”^{xviii} Boon’s is an important celebration of the plethora of possibilities that copying as cultural practice opens up. In fact, as Boon explains: “The word ‘copy’ comes to us from the Latin word ‘copia,’ meaning ‘abundance, plenty, multitude.’ Copia was also the Roman goddess associated with abundance. [...] Copia is depicted on a Roman coin with th[e] horn of plenty, overflowing with the bounty of the earth, from which we get the word ‘cornucopia.’ [...] Although we no longer associate copying with abundance, but link it rather with the theft or deterioration of an original, and thus a decrease, the phenomena we label ‘copies’ and the activities we call ‘copying’ still manifest this abundance and this increase.”^{xix}





5



Tristes Tropiques: Illustrations hors texte
by Laurence Aëgerter and
Ronald van Tienhoven, (2011)

Aëgerter's project consists of two books: Book 1 – a facsimile print of the photographic supplement of the well-known book *Tristes Tropiques* (1955) by the French cultural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss; Book 2 – Laurence Aëgerter and Ronald van Tienhoven's reconstruction of the photographs of Brazilian tribes, by Claude Lévi-Strauss. To make Book 2, the artists asked members of a local community in The Netherlands to act as models, bringing the photographs to life again, as 'tableaux vivants'. Employing copying as a form of 'counter-exploration' through space and time,^{xx} the artists emphasized the continuum of human expression and cultural exchange.

2 booklets of 56 pages each. Edition of 1000.

Catching some air: Library drawings

by Bik van der Pol, (2002)

Dutch artists Liesbeth Bik and Jos Van der Pol spent a month in Leeds in October 2000 on a Henry Moore Institute Research Fellowship. They spent most of their time in the library, looking through books about sculpture and photocopying images which interested them. They decided to get physical, up close and personal with key images of twentieth century art, using felt-tip pens and paper to trace the lines of the fragile ghosts of these photocopied images ('[to] trace (v.), [to] copy (a drawing, map, a design) by drawing over the lines on a superimposed piece of paper'^{xxi}). By doing so, the artists re-traced and re-produced the sources – or rather their copies – in exact but imperfect duplications. They were particularly interested in the experimental work of artists from the late 1960s to 1970s – Nauman, Buren, Beuys, Acconci – though they were not limited to the period. Their collection of tracings was exhibited at the Henry Moore Institute (1 June - 1 September 2002) and reproduced in a facsimile 'sketch book' which accompanied it. In their introduction, the artists write: *"Copying is an ambiguous activity: it is very dumb and automatic work but on the other hand it demands enough concentration to think about what one is doing, what the material is about. In other words, it generates imagination and ideas and brings about another kind of knowledge than the purely historical, by, maybe, creating an understanding of different ways of thinking. Almost in passing - because it happens while doing the job - copying communicates the stories behind the material by carefully looking at them, connecting them with images in our memory and found footage. In this way, the material transforms into joint knowledge and focuses attention on different notions, so closely related to artistic practice, such as authorship, ownership, originality, the aura of the art object, neutrality, hierarchy, appropriation, innovation and - not least - the processing and transference of information."*^{xxii}

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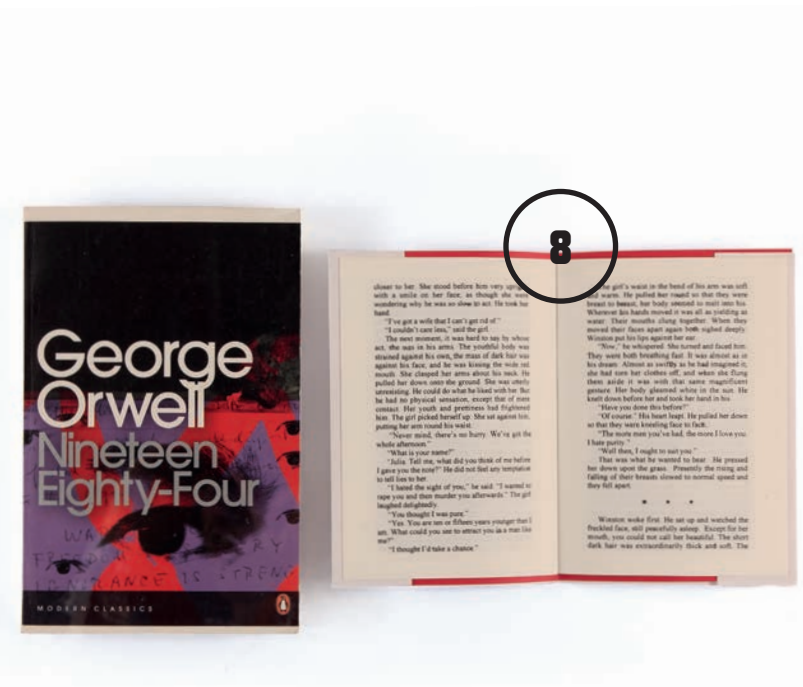


My Sun Also Rises by Rob Fitterman(2008)

My Sun Also Rises is a companion to Fitterman's *The Sun Also Also Rises* (2008), both a result of writing through Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1957). *The Sun Also Also Rises* is an erasure of Hemingway's novel in which Fitterman leaves behind only phrases beginning with "I". For example: "I am very much impressed by that. I never met any one of his class who remembered him. I mistrust all frank and simple people. I always had a suspicion. I finally had somebody verify the story. I was his tennis friend. I do not believe that. I first became aware of his lady's attitude toward him one night after the three of us had dined together. I suggested we fly to Strasbourg. I thought it was accidental. I was kicked again under the table. I was not kicked again. I said good-night and went out. I watched him walk back to the café. I rather liked him."^{xxiii}

My Sun Also Rises translates the erased version of the Hemingway original into a narrative about Fitterman's experience of moving to downtown Manhattan in the 1980s as a young writer. In these works, Fitterman acknowledges that the role of the reader in engaging with existing literary works is synonymous with writing their own way through them. As the philosopher Jacques Rancière put it: "To look and to listen requires the work of attention, selection, reappropriation, a way of making one's own film, one's own text, one's own installation out of what the artist has presented."^{xxiv} Here, by writing through Hemingway, Fitterman explores his own difficult relationship with the author: "When I was 13, my brother gave me a copy of Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). It was my first foray into real Literature and I hated it. Even with little or no way to enter the novel, I dutifully slugged through it (I mean, what is cog-nak anyway?) Years later, I have returned to revisit the relationship."^{xxv} Following Fitterman, Naylor Blake created *Also Also Also Rises the Sun* (2008), his own erasure of Hemingway's text in which the original prose is redacted to a minimalist series of truncated intransitives and definite nouns.

Published by No Press in 2008, these three chapbooks were produced in editions of 60 copies each and distributed as a trilogy.



Winston & Julia: A Love Story by Carolyn Thompson (2003)

Winston & Julia: A Love Story is an appropriation of George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949). In Thompson's work, the original political and futuristic content has been removed. From the remaining text, sentences and part sentences have been selected, to create a similar but different narrative, based solely on the intense relationship between the characters Winston and Julia. Despite the physical erasure of Big Brother from Orwell's primary text, the omnipresent state appears even more scarily present. Erasure here emerges as a source of new origin, in the process of copying and transformation repeating something that has already been said and that which has not, as yet, been articulated at the same time. Here, to borrow from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "each act of reading the 'text' is a preface to the next."^{xxvi}

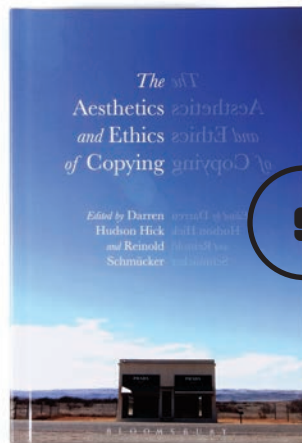
The work comes in an edition of 100 handmade books, 11cm x 15.5cm.

The Aesthetics and Ethics of Copying

by Darren Hudson Hick & Reinold Schmücker (2016)

Examining the aesthetic, ethical and legal implications of copying is an anthology by Darren Hudson Hick & Reinold Schmücker. *The Aesthetics and Ethics of Copying* responds to the rapidly changing attitudes towards the use of another's ideas, styles, and artworks. With advances in technology making the copying of artworks and other artefacts exponentially easier, questions of copying no longer focus on the problems of forgery: they now expand into aesthetic and ethical legal concerns. This volume addresses the changes and provides the first philosophical foundation for an aesthetics and ethics of copying. Scholars from philosophy of art, philosophy of technology, philosophy of law, ethics, legal theory, media studies, art history, literary theory, and sociology discuss the role that copying plays in human culture, confronting the question of how-and why-copying fits into our broader system of values. Teasing out the factors and conceptual distinctions that must be accounted for in an ontology of copying, they set a groundwork for understanding the nature of copies and copying, showing how these interweave with ethical and legal concepts. Covering unique concerns for copying in the domain of artworks, from music and art to plays and literature, contributors look at work by artists including Heinrich von Kleist, Robert Rauschenberg, Courbet and Manet and conclude with the normative dimensions of copying in the twenty-first century. By bringing this topic into the philosophical domain and highlighting its philosophical relevance, *The Aesthetics and Ethics of Copying* establishes the complex conditions – ontological, aesthetic, ethical, cultural, and legal – that underlie and complicate the topic. The result is a timely collection that establishes the need for further discussion.^{xxvii}

Published by Bloomsbury Academic.



Nevermind

by Rob Fitterman (2016)

In this large book, a veritable doorstop, Fitterman “repurposes” the seminal Nirvana album *Nevermind* by laying out the entirety of the album’s lyrics, word-for-word, over the course of 712 pages, leaving out punctuation and capitalization, to present the album like lines of poetry—as ‘poems’, [...] that minimally contain an average of one-to-ten words a page, so that the lyrics of the opening track, for example, the grunge anthem “Smells Like Teen Spirit,” sprawl languidly across the book’s first 67 pages. Song titles are also redacted from the text, so that each song leads uninterrupted into the next. The book is void^{xxviii} of any other paratextual information. “In *Nevermind*, Robert Fitterman relaxes the lyrics of Nirvana’s iconic album of the same title into a slow poetry spread across 700 pages, one that halts grunge’s hammering pace into a meditation on the emotional spaces of minimalist and concrete poetry, and the physical space of the book itself.”^{xxix} In an interview with the literary critic Paul Stephens, Fitterman records his point of departure for this work: “For the last several years, I have had it in my mind to do a big minimalist poem—the scale was important. I carried around that idea without a subject for a long time, sort of like having the tune without the lyrics. I was attracted to this idea because I was thinking about the status of the poetry book, as object, in digital culture.”^{xxx}

Published by Wonder in New York City & Oakland.



Spring Snow: A Translation by Alison Turnbull (2002)

"Alison Turnbull takes Japanese author Yukio Mishima's novel *Spring Snow* as a starting point to produce *Spring Snow – A Translation*, which is literally a visual translation ordered by colour. Drawing on Mishima's evocative use of colour in the novel, Turnbull condenses the narrative into a colour palette. Working from the English edition, she isolates and orders each of the more than six hundred colours as they appear in the text – what emerges is a visual essay on the nature of translation."^{xxxii} Tony White's introduction to the volume brings to the fore Turnbull's complex engagement with and her interest in forms of copying. In his attempt to contextualize *Spring Snow*, White presents a remix of cut ups to reflect on Turnbull's work as well as its relationship to the work of Kimitake Hiraoka, otherwise known as Yukio Mishima.

Published by Book Works

Getting Inside Jack Kerouac's Head by Simon Morris (2010)

Morris' bookwork, *Getting Inside Jack Kerouac's Head*, is a performative retyping of the recently published original scroll edition of Jack Kerouac's beat classic, *On the Road* (1957). Morris' project first appeared as an ongoing journey through the book, read and re-typed on a blog one page per day, from 31 May 2008 through to 24 March 2009. This newly published codex version pours the content of that performative retyping back into the format of the paperback source book. It follows the default logic of a blog archive to put the last post / page at the start and stores the rest of the entries in reverse order. In other words, whereas Kerouac traveled from the East coast to the West coast, Morris crosses America from West to East. "Retyping *On the Road* is not only a remarkable performance—of endurance, concentration, and apprenticeship—it is also a deadpan experiment in textual literary criticism. Kerouac's original typescript was oriented toward the writer: a jury-rigged roll of sheets taped together to give the illusion of continuous textual flow (whereas a true "scroll," properly speaking, would allow one to move forward and backward, and thus would have been in the service of a reader). Morris' practice collapses reader and writer, reorienting Kerouac's typescript to the digital, discontinuous unit of the published codex page. In doing so, Morris both inverts Kerouac's style of production — pecking slowly and methodically where his predecessor sped along at a reputed one-hundred-words-per-benzedrine-fuelled-minute — and he simultaneously fulfills its legend. The annotated details of Kerouac's typescript belie the Beat ideology of unconstrained spontaneity and improvisation; it is pockmarked with revisions and edits and polishing. Morris, on the other hand, hews to the adage "first thought, best thought" with an unflinching allegiance. A constrained and unexpressive homage to the era that heralded unconstrained and improvisatory expressionism, *Getting Inside Jack Kerouac's Head* showcases the critical power of the extended techniques of conceptually rigorous "uncreative writing." In the process it reclaims Truman Capote's Parthian shot as a point of pride: "it isn't writing at all—it's typing." And *type*—as Kerouac used the word in *On the Road*—is all about genre."^{xxxiii}

Published by information as material.

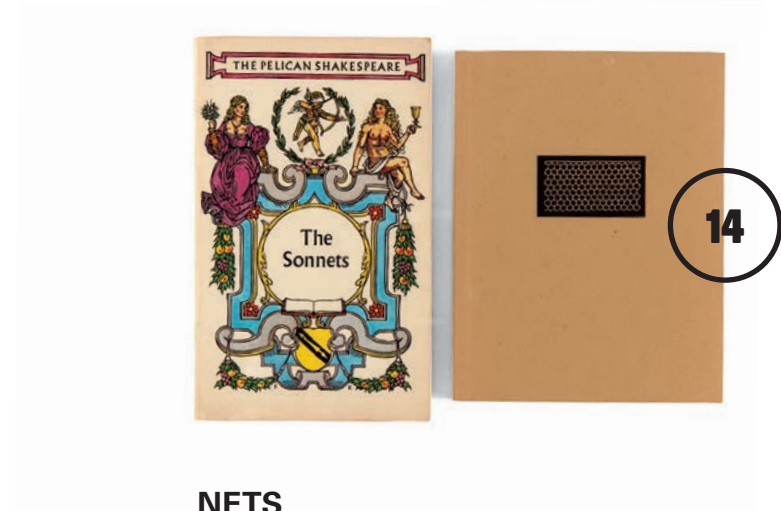
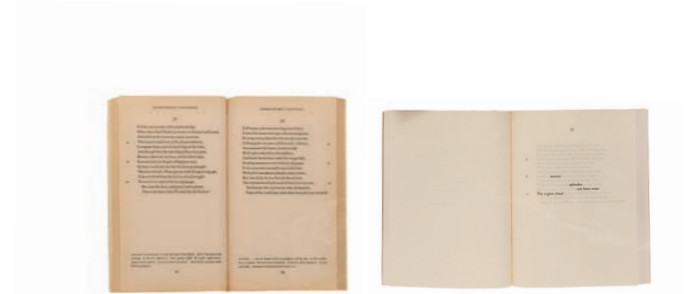


Getting Inside Simon Morris' Head

by Joe Hale (2013)

Getting Inside Simon Morris' Head is a performative retyping of Simon Morris' conceptual bookwork *Getting Inside Jack Kerouac's Head* (also published by information as material, 2010). Like Morris' original performance of retyping the scroll edition of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, Joe Hale's project first appeared as a blog. At the rate of one page per day, like Morris retyping Kerouac before him, Hale retyped Morris' entire book and in doing so re-retraces Kerouac's famous adventure. Morris gave us all of Kerouac's pages in reverse order: each blog post presented one page and the default settings of the blog platform organised his posts in reverse order, from the newest to the oldest. Now inverted again, as a double negative, Hale has restored the direction of travel to the story and produced a wholly (un)original new text. This first printed edition takes the imitative gesture to a new extreme. It features an introductory essay by poet Kenneth Goldsmith and reuses Morris' paratext. From the cover design to the choice of paper, Hale tests the limits of conceptual extension. "If the nascent internet gave conceptual writing its database logic, and the browser-based '90s offered a model of wholesale appropriation, the relay mode of Web 2.0 – retweeting, reblogging, forwarding, embedding, etcetera – opens a new horizon. Realizing the potential of the platform that supported its source, *Getting Inside Simon Morris' Head* is conceptual writing for the age of social media." xxxiii "Someone retypes a text that already exists in millions of copies, and he retypes it day by day, word for word, not by simply copying & pasting the 'original'. This action sounds odd, even anachronistic, like a throwback to medieval times. But in fact Joe Hale's act of copying is at the cutting edge of literature and has unsettling implications: Once, in the middle ages, the copyist remained anonymous; now he claims authorship. Once copying was an act of reproduction; now it is synonymous with an act of creation. Once the copies, no matter how textually erratic, were considered to undoubtedly be instantiations of the pre-existing work; now they are proposed as distinct works, no matter how similar to their source they might be. The distinguishing qualities of a work of literature no longer depend, necessarily, on 'the work's' textual distinctiveness. This challenging idea is directly opened out by this book. Consequently, Hale's contribution to our understanding of literature is significant." xxxiv

Published by information as material.

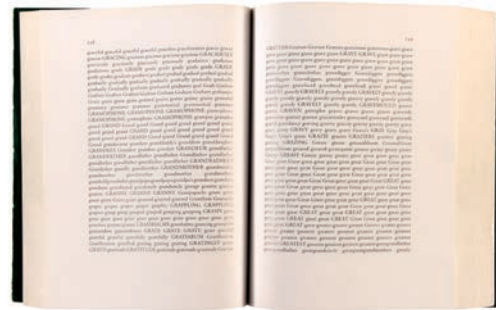


NETS

by Jen Bervin (2004)

"In *NETS*, poet and artist Jen Bervin strips Shakespeare's sonnets bare to the nets, chiseling away at the familiar lines to reveal surprising new poems, while pointing obliquely at the unavoidably intertextual ground of writing. Using visual compositional strategies as effectively as verbal ones, Bervin allows the discarded text to remain on the page as a ghostly presence, while she highlights the marginal line-numbers that allude to the sonnets canonization." xxxv In her process note included at the back of the book, Bervin writes: "I stripped Shakespeare's sonnets bare to the 'nets' to make the space of the poems open, porous, possible—a divergent elsewhere. When we write poems, the history of poetry is with us, preinscribed in the white of the page; when we read or write poems, we do it with or against this palimpsest." xxxvi

Published by Ugly Duckling Presse.



Tree of Codes by Jonathan Safran Foer (2010)

Jonathan Safran Foer cuts his way through Bruno Schultz’s well known collection of short stories, *The Street of Crocodiles* (1934) so the reader can experience a new reading three-dimensionally through the host text. Safran Foer describes his process: “For years I wanted to create a die-cut book by erasure, a book whose meaning was exhumed from another book. I had thought of trying the technique with the dictionary, the encyclopedia, the phone book, various works of fiction, and with my own novels. But any of those options would have merely spoken to the process. The book would have been an exercise. I was in search of a text whose erasure would somehow be a continuation of its creation. *The Street of Crocodiles* is often my answer to the impossible-to-answer question: What is your favourite book? And yet, it took me a year to recognise it as the text I’d been looking for. Why? Because I loved the book too much to conceive of changing it, much less erasing it? Because the historical resonances were too powerful? Working on this book was extraordinarily difficult. So many of Schultz’s sentences feel elemental, unbreakdownable. And his writing is so unbelievably good, so much better than anything that could conceivably be done with it, my instinct was to leave it alone. At times I felt that I was making a gravestone rubbing of *The Street of Crocodiles*, and at times that I was transcribing a dream that *The Street of Crocodiles* might have had. I have never read another book so intensely or so many times. I’ve never memorized so many phrases, or, as the act of erasure progressed, forgotten so many phrases. This is in no way a book like *The Street of Crocodiles*. It is a small response to that great book.”^{xxxviii}

Safran Foer might be modest, but as the artist Olafur Eliasson says: “*Tree of Codes* [is] an extraordinary journey that activates the layers of time and space involved in the handling of a book and its heap of words. Jonathan Safran Foer deftly deploys sculptural means to craft a truly compelling story. In our world of screens, he welds narrative, materiality, and our reading experience into a book that remembers it actually has a body.”^{xxxix}

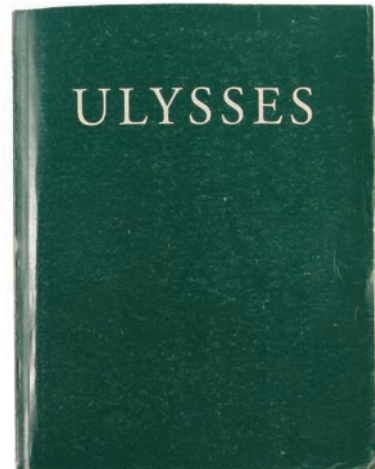
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Ulysses by Simon Popper (2006)

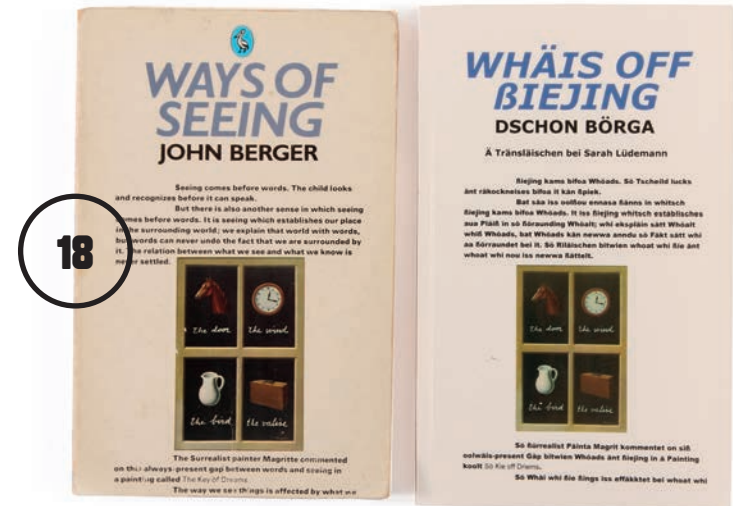
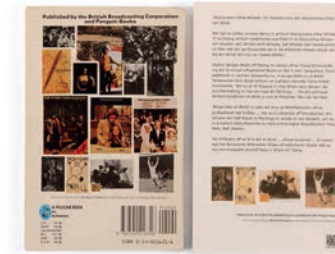
A reinterpretation of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* in which all the words in the original book are rearranged in alphabetical order, followed by a list of all the punctuation in the novel (which appropriately ends on a full stop). As Nabokov told his students: “*Ulysses* is a fat book of more than two hundred and sixty thousand words; it is a rich book with a vocabulary of about thirty thousand words.”^{xxxvii} The average human has 30,000 words spinning around their head. Someone with a limited vocabulary has 10,000 words and a complete wordsmith, like James Joyce – who spoke no less than seventeen different languages – probably mastered the upper limit, which is 150,000 words. By foregrounding the sheer number of words on Joyce’s pages, Popper experiments with reproducibility of language not as information but as text, or rather textual material.

Self-published and distributed by Motto books.

Capital by Kenneth Goldsmith (2015)

Kenneth Goldsmith's 1000 page project *Capital* "transposes Walter Benjamin's unfinished magnum opus of literary montage on the modern city, *The Arcades Project*, from nineteenth-century Paris to twentieth-century New York, bringing the streets and its inhabitants to life in categories such as "Sex," "Central Park," "Commodity," "Loneliness," "Gentrification," "Advertising," and "Mapplethorpe."^x Goldsmith spent thirteen years putting the project together, the same time Benjamin spent compiling *The Arcades Project*. "[It] is a kaleidoscopic assemblage and poetic history of New York: an unparalleled and original homage to the city, composed entirely of quotations. Drawn from a huge array of sources—histories, memoirs, newspaper articles, novels, government documents, emails—and organized into interpretive categories that reveal the philosophical architecture of the city, *Capital* is the nec plus ultra of books on the ultimate megalopolis."^{xii} Although one is not strictly a copy of the other, the method and form Benjamin used has been copied and mapped on to a different city for a different century by Goldsmith.

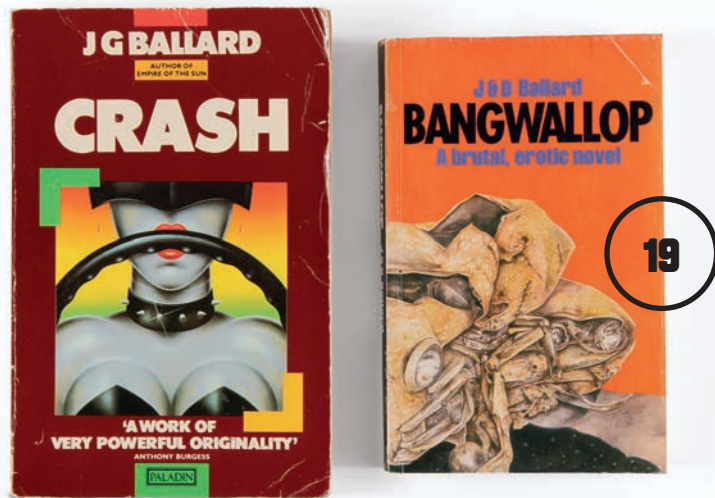
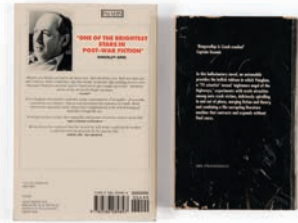
Published by Verso.



Whäis off Biejing by Dschon Börga (n.d.) or Ways of Seeing by Sarah Lüdemann

Sarah Lüdemann made a phonetic translation of John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, entitled *Whäis off Biejing*. *Whäis off Biejing* is her personal phonetic transcript, an emulation of English sounds in German writing and as such a creation of her very own language. She politely asked Penguin to reproduce this book. Penguin said 'no'. She wrote to John Berger asking permission – Berger didn't reply.

Privately published.



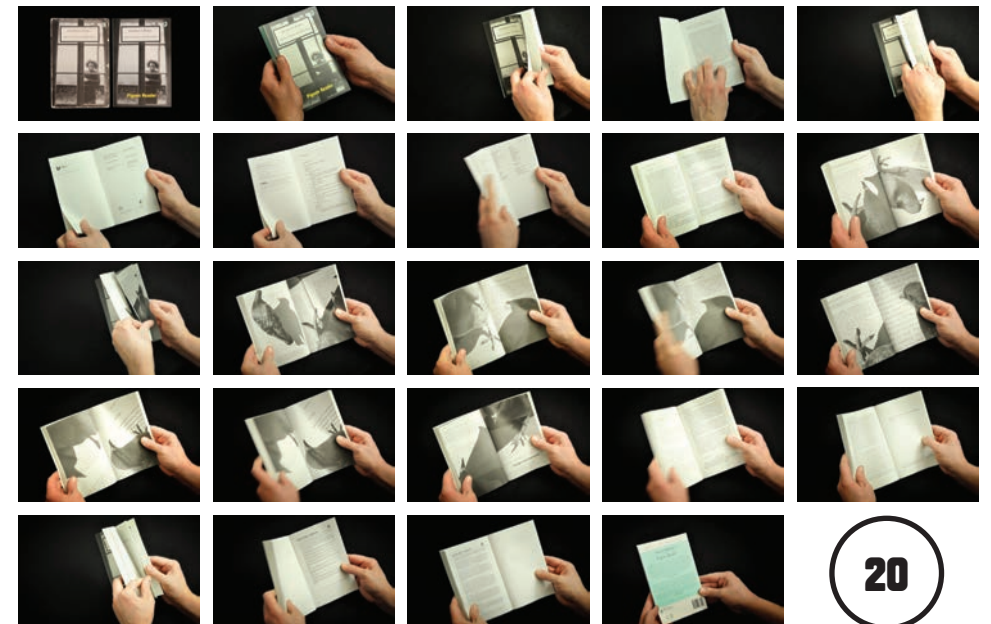
Bangwallop: A Brutal Erotic Novel
by J & D Ballard [Jake & Dinos Chapman]
(2010)

One of an edition of 1000, produced as part of the “Crash” exhibition at Gagosian Gallery, London, 11 February – 01 April 2010. This work is a subversion of J. G. Ballard’s original text, *Crash*, in which Jake and Dinos Chapman crashed the primary text through a whole range of Microsoft Word procedures, utilizing a bespoke file-corrupting algorithm. Privately published as a facsimile of the 1970s paperback of *Crash*, including the reproduction of the original orange cover, *Bangwallop* by Ballard was sold at the Gagosian exhibition as a multiple.

Pigeon Reader
by Simon Morris (2010)

Inspired by Georges Perec’s musings on reading, which he likens to “a pigeon pecking at the ground in search of breadcrumbs,” Simon Morris’ book sets exactly those feral avians to work on the very surface of Perec’s celebrated text “Reading: A Socio-physiological Outline”. In the process he puts pressure on all of the terms in Perec’s title: what does it mean to engage a text physically—looking at print, flipping pages, processing language, vocalizing, responding—without any of the social practices or semantics we usually associate with “reading.” Or, to put it as Wittgenstein might: what activities still embody a grammar of reading even in the absence of what would seem to be its defining features? *Pigeon Reader* intervenes as a precise facsimile edition of Perec’s book, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (trans. John Sturrock, London: Penguin books, 1997), with only the single chapter on reading modified. *Pigeon Reader* is thus a kind of inversion, as well as an intervention: where British copyright laws permit copying 5% of a book, Morris copied 95%. In reprinting the book to this extent, Morris’ conviction has gone beyond the recent tradition of the artists’ insert. Within the paratext he has corrupted the corporate branding, with penguins morphing into pigeons and advertisements re-imagined. One could be forgiven for asking why someone would remake an entire book just to engage in a conceptual play in a single chapter. Morris would likely respond by further appropriating and recontextualizing Perec’s closing words from “Reading”: “These are questions that I ask, and I think there is some point in a writer asking them.”

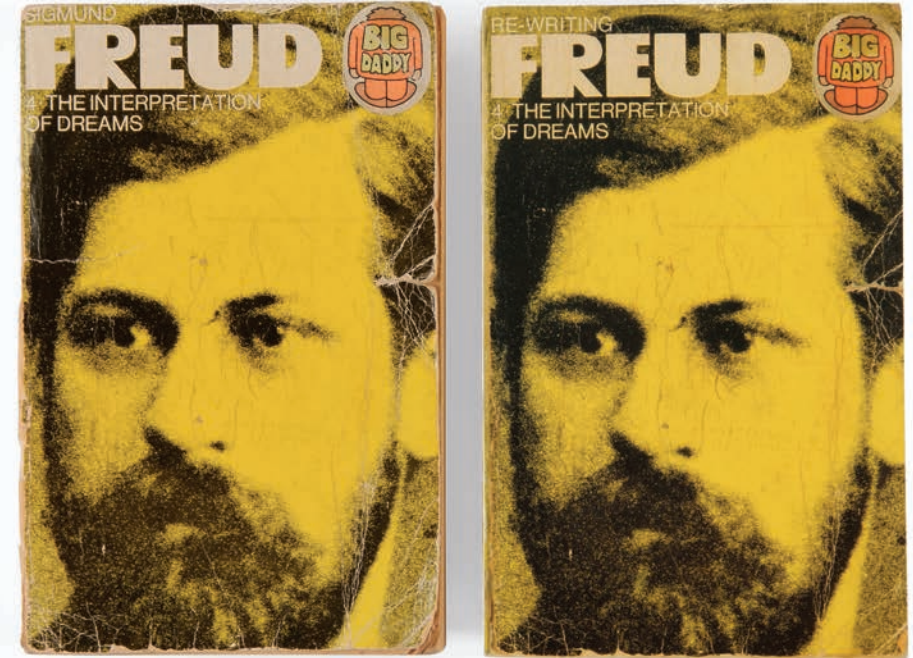
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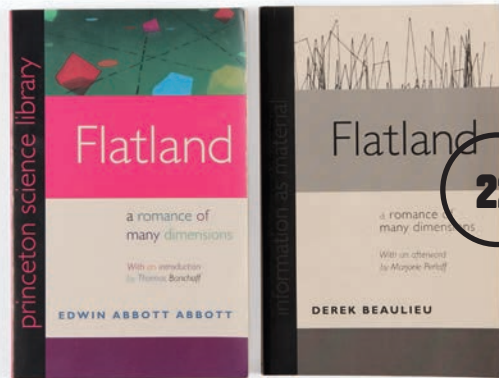


Re-Writing Freud by Simon Morris (2005)

For this book work, *Re-Writing Freud* the artist Simon Morris has re-written Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). A computer programme (designed by Christine Farion) randomly selects words, one at a time, from Freud's 222,704-word text and reconstructs the entire book, word by word, making a new book with the same words, every time the programme is re-started. This book is one instantiation of that process, scrupulously typeset according to the dimensions, fonts, chapter divisions and paragraph lengths of the 1976 Penguin paperback edition of Freud's work, and printed on equivalent paper. In *Re-Writing Freud*, Morris unleashes a virus. He puts a contagious process to work, intervening in Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, rupturing it and returning it to us in a new order. By subjecting Freud's words to a random re-distribution, Morris turns meaning into non-meaning, putting the spectator to work in order to make sense of the new poetic juxtapositions. The world of dreams is subject to the laws of the irrational and *Re-Writing Freud* gives the spectator the chance to view Freud's text in its primal state. This fine production was printed by Imschoot, Ghent, in an edition of 1000, and given their blue stamp of approval. As an exercise in conceptualist formalism, Morris' version of Freud's text follows the typographic layout found in the edition of Freud's work owned by his long-term collaborator, the psychoanalyst Dr. Howard Britton, whose worn book cover sets the tone for Morris' appropriation. As the American critic Craig Douglas Dworkin writes in his introduction to *Re-Writing Freud*, flashes of meaning haunt and persist within this re-written text; *"language simply cannot help itself. And we realise, reading this book, that we can't do anything for it. It is through and not in spite of its methods that "the book dreams" of the "coherence of nonsensical" "chance activity". In precisely those moments of this text where even the screen of chance cannot prevent two adjacent words from unexpectedly making sense, or suggesting a common unwritten third term, where themes emerge like shared secrets between certain words, where the very materiality meant to obviate reference only allows language to point back to itself in a series of differences and repetitions, in the rubbing of one word against the next, we catch language in its ceaseless symptomatic acts and assignments: dangerous idiomatic liaisons, anxious avoidances, teasing connotations, flirtations with syntax, illicit frissons, incestuous marriages of words with shared etymological lineages, narcissistic mirrorings, and all the perverse and unnatural combinations of aberrant ungrammatical coupling we cannot, as readers, resist seeing as such. Don't look away – for therein lies the lesson of the aleatory text: so many graces of fate, so many fates of grace."*^{xiii} *"The reader who responds to this book by complaining that it is nonsensical is neither right nor wrong, but asking the wrong question, posing an impossible problem in response to this book's insistent imaginary solution."*^{xiii}

Published by information as material.





Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions by Derek Beaulieu (2007)

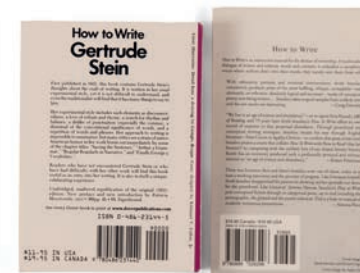
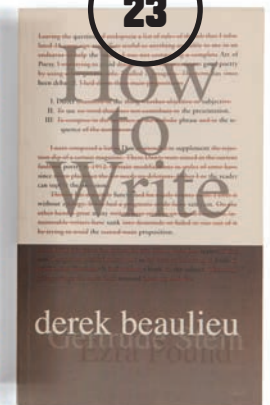
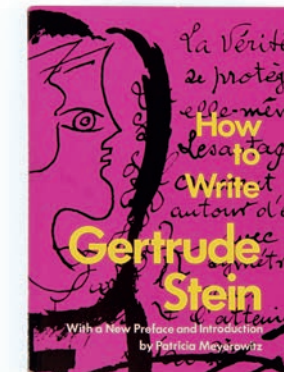
Edwin A. Abbot's famed science fiction novella from 1884, *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*, is spatially and conceptually appropriated by Beaulieu in his acclaimed book-as-poetic-diagram of the same name. In prose form, Abbot described a two-dimensional universe inhabited by polygons, one of whom narrates the reader through an encounter with the inconceivable: a third dimension. In a hyper-exaggeration of the printed page as a representational form, Beaulieu extends Abbot's premise by turning every page in the Princeton University Press edition (1991) into an alphabetical line drawing, and inverts the 'encounter with the inconceivable' for his three-dimensional readers by deleting all the text and posing a poem that makes no allusion beyond two-dimensions. The resulting graphical poem riffs off the common appropriation of Abbot's story for the teaching of geometry to school students; it engages the double-function of printed material as both presentation and representation and is contextualised as an avant-garde literary act in the Afterword by renowned American critic Marjorie Perloff. "As the Greenbergian modernists proclaimed the flatness of the canvas, so does Derek Beaulieu reduce the page to a flat plane. The result is a new kind of flatness—call it non-illusionistic literature—a depthless fiction, one where image and narrative is reduced to line and shadow. In the great tradition of Picabia, Beaulieu creates a perfect work of mechanical writing with one foot in the concrete poetic past and another in the flat screen future."^{xliv} "In *Flatland*, Beaulieu excavates the fertile ground between form and content, gesture and geography, and word and meaning. He challenges the physicality of the page as a bodily engagement in recuperating essential ideas embedded in writing as communication."^{xlv}

Published by information as material.

How to Write by Derek Beaulieu (2010)

"*How to Write* is a perverse Coles Notes^{xvii}: a paradigm of prosody where writing as sampling, borrowing, cutting-and-pasting and mash-up meets literature. This collection of conceptual short fiction takes inspiration from Lautréamont's decree that 'plagiarism is necessary. It is implied in the idea of progress. It clasps the author's sentence tight, uses his expressions, eliminates a false idea, replaces it with the right idea.' *How to Write* is an instruction manual for the demise of ownership. A multitudinous dialogue of writers and subjects, words and contexts, it unleashes a cacophony of voices where authors don't own their words, they merely rent them from other authors. Containing ten pieces of conceptual prose ranging from the purely appropriated through the entirely recomposed, and covering a range of texts from the anonymous to the famous, it includes samplings from, among many others: Laurence Sterne; Agatha Christie; Bob Kane; Roy Lichtenstein; and every piece of text within one block of the author's home. Its title story is an exhaustive record of every incidence of the words "write" or "writes" in forty different English-language texts picked aesthetically to represent a disparate number of genres. With *How to Write*, Beaulieu suggests writers and artists would be better served to "make it reframed, make it borrowed, make it re-contextualized. By recasting the canon with cut-up directions for successful writing, catalogues of events, and lists of vocabulary, he gleefully illustrates Picasso's dictum that "Good artists copy. Great artists steal."^{xviii} Even the title is half-inched from Gertrude Stein's earlier publication, *How to Write* (1931).

Published by Talonbooks.



Reading the Remove of Literature

by Nick Thurston (2006)

Reading the Remove of Literature is a reading of the English translation of Maurice Blanchot's seminal book *L'Espace littéraire* (1955), performed on the page as an annotative writing that encircles the should-be space of print. Through the progressive appropriation and then erasure of Blanchot's text, and through a processual transposition of hand-writing into formal typography, Thurston has conceptualised and produced an astounding new book. The meaning of the candid reflections and meditations which form the incisive marginalia is founded in a tension with the suggestions of the absent text. Floating alone these annotations may have little worth or make little sense, but between these covers they do not deny the history of their derivation: They are constantly anchored by that which is missing, in a creative erring, in a process of over-coming, which in this book asserts an equality of presence between the read and the written, the reading and the writing. At once poetic and philosophical, Thurston's work is an intervention into the book as a space of knowledge that renders productive the paradoxical relationship of the artistic act and the art work – the very question of the possibility of literature that obsessed Blanchot – contained simultaneously by the edges it continues beyond and the bind(ing)s that hold it together and hold it still. *"By removing Blanchot's text, Thurston paradoxically gives us Blanchot's work; he presents rather than absents language. The book proffers the gift of theft. Which is as much as any work of literature, in Blanchot's definition, can do... Countersigning Blanchot's text, Thurston also forges his name. Whiteness, witness: the proper genre for Reading the Remove of Literature may be portraiture."*^{xviii} Using the much employed information as material strategy of 'undesigning' or what others have termed 'brandjacking' as a method, Thurston's book is a facsimile reproduction of Blanchot's edition with fonts, colours, paper, card covers and design evoking the source text as closely as possible.

Published by information as material.



Conclusion

What this small collection hoped to show is the rich variety of approaches to copying, all working to challenge and expand our idea of what literature can possibly be. Through the act of erasing, Bennequin, Fitterman, Thompson, Thurston and Bik van der Pol all reveal the very essence of their material, creating fragile ghosts and delicate sepulchres of literary monuments from our collective past in order to rethink the future of reading and writing. To remodel this seminal relationship is the overt intention of Simon Morris, Joe Hale and Derek Beaulieu's painstaking copying by rote. Their literary investigations challenge the idea that the distinguishing qualities of a work of literature depend on a work's textual distinctiveness.

While employing diverse approaches to copying, these experiments take no interest in copying as a form of reproducibility. Instead, they explore the iterative possibility implicit in every act of copying as a unique form of criticality; they expose the potential of copying as a critical strategy. Their self-reflexive iterability is a method of writing and, at the same time, of interrogating the very paradigms of writing. Works included here demand that we read differently by colliding the present/past, here/now, reading/writing, 2D/3D, old and new, authorship and ownership. They are all about re-framing, re-contextualising, not so much asking age-old questions, as finding new ones that best reflect the contemporary moment. To achieve that, they reconfigure reading as a form of writing, erasure as a mode of inscription, and copying as a form of critique.

Start copying what you love.

Copy, copy, copy.

**And at the end of the copy,
you will find yourself.”ⁱ**

Yohji Yamamoto

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